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CHURCH OF JESUS
CHRIST OF LATTER
DAY SAINTS

EPISTLE

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AN
EPISTLE
OF THE
FIRST PRESIDENCY,
TO THE

Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,
in General Conference Assembled.

READ APRIL 8TH, 1887,
AT THE
FIFTY-SEVENTH GENERAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE,
HELD AT PROVO, UTAH.

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AN EPISTLE OF THE FIRST PRESIDENCY

TO THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS IN
GENERAL CONFERENCE ASSEMBLED.

INTRODUCTORY.

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

Once more, in the providence of the Almighty, we are permitted to address you in an Epistle. It would give us very great pleasure to be able to communicate to you our views orally; but through circumstances with which you are all familiar this gratification is denied us. We rejoice, however, that the privilege of communicating a few of our thoughts in writing is still at our disposal. We have profound feelings of thanksgiving to our God for His goodness and mercy unto His people. Personally we have reason to be very grateful to Him for His preserving care in our behalf.

Zion has been passing through a series of trials which God will undoubtedly overrule for our good. The experience of the past two years and a half has convinced us that there has been a divine providence in all that has taken place, and in the shaping of ordeals to which the Saints have been subjected. Painful as they have been to very many, the day will come when they will be acknowledged as having been the means of bringing great benefits to Zion.

The Twelve Apostles and their Counselors have labored with great efficiency, as far as they have had opportunity, among the people, and have been active in attending to the duties devolving upon them. The health of all has been good. Recent letters from

those outside the Territory convey the intelligence that they are enjoying their labors and are successful in the performance thereof. The latest advices from President Woodruff assure us of his good health. Though he is now past 80 years of age, his bodily and mental vigor appear unimpaired.

We ourselves are in the enjoyment of good health, and able to perform our duties with satisfaction to ourselves and pleasure in the liberty that we enjoy. President Joseph F. Smith's health has been somewhat impaired, but he is now fully restored.

ZEAL AND DILIGENCE OF THE PEOPLE.

The most gladdening news we can communicate to the Conference of the Church in our Epistle is that from every part of the land which we inhabit, gratifying reports have been received of the zeal and diligence of the people in attending to the duties of their religion. Probably at no time in our history has there been a better disposition manifested by the people to attend their meetings on the Sabbath day, and on fast days, and the prayer meetings which have been held during week day evenings. Meetings have been held at suitable private residences on many of the blocks in the city and country wards throughout these mountains. These have generally been crowded, and have been occupied by the Elders in giving instruction, and by the Saints in bearing

testimony and in prayer. All the Elders who have been free to travel who have reported the results of their labors to us, agree in saying that at no time in their experience have the meetings which they have held been so crowded as during the past winter. These evidences of the faith and diligence of the people are exceedingly gratifying to us. We have been cheered in listening to them; for we know that when the Latter-day Saints repent of their sins and devote themselves assiduously to keeping the commandments of God, their enemies cannot have much power over them:

As a people, in times past we have been careless and indifferent in many directions. Neglect of duties has been too common everywhere. Hypocrisy has been indulged in to some extent, and a laxity has prevailed in many quarters concerning the keeping of the laws of God which is not in accord with the spirit of the Gospel. Under these circumstances the Lord has permitted persecutions and trials to come upon His people that have had the effect of stirring them up to greater diligence. When the Lord, for any reason, turns His face away from His people, and is slow to hear their cries, thorough repentance on their part and a complete abandonment of their evil ways are sure to bring back His favor, and to cause His countenance to shine upon them. This has been the case in every age when God has had a people upon the earth. In our own day we have seen frequent illustrations of this. We have never feared for the people, nor for the prosperity of the work, when the Latter-day Saints have been fully alive to the duties and requirements of their religion. But when they have been careless and neglectful, or disobedient and hard in their hearts, then we have trembled; for when the Saints are in such a condition the displeasure of the Lord is sure to be awakened against them, and His scourges are likely to fall upon

them. The Lord does not permit His enemies, nor the enemies of His people, to prevail over them for any length of time when they are living near unto Him and complying strictly with His will. All His promises, of the brightest and most glorious character, encouraging and hopeful, are given to those who keep His commandments and who seek earnestly to carry out in their lives the principles of salvation which He has revealed. When a people are in this condition their enemies cannot have much power over them.

WHY OUR ENEMIES HAVE FAILED.

We attribute the failure on the part of our enemies to accomplish their wicked purposes during the last session of Congress to the fact that the Saints were more true to their professions, and were offering up, in sincere humility and faith, their petitions to the God of heaven for His interposition in their behalf. When we consider the character of the measures which were framed in the first place, and which it was the evident purpose of our enemies to force through and make law, it is clearly to be seen that our Father in heaven has restrained the efforts of the wicked and defeated them in their iniquitous designs. For a while it seemed inevitable that every liberty would be wrested from us, and that we should be brought into subjection to a most odious tyranny and be stripped of every right which belongs to free men. And though the measures which have been enacted are odious to the principles of true republicanism, still our enemies are disappointed in their schemes and feel that they have been defeated; while the Saints rejoice in the goodness of God, and feel assured that by His help and their continued faithfulness in keeping His commandments and relying upon Him, they will be able to endure, with patience and without grievous loss, all that the enemies of His Kingdom shall have power to bring upon them.

DUTIES OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

It is of the utmost importance that the teachings which have heretofore been given to the officers of the Church, and which it is not necessary to repeat at length here, should be kept in mind and carried out in the spirit in which they were given. Great responsibility rests at the present time upon those Elders who have liberty of action, and they should be untiring in their efforts to magnify their Priesthood and to do everything possible towards building up and strengthening the Saints in the practice of those holy principles which God has revealed. Much depends in these days of trial upon those who bear the Lesser Priesthood. They have opportunities which are of unequalled advantage. They visit, or should visit, the people at their homes. They talk to them by their firesides. They can see their inner lives, and learn wherein they need strengthening and guiding, in order to be more efficient Latter-day Saints. When Priests and Teachers understand their duties and seek to enjoy the spirit of their offices, they can do an immense amount of good; for they are brought directly in contact with the people; they learn their wants, are made familiar with their weaknesses, and are in a position to check the growth of evil tendencies in parents and in children. There is, in many instances, doubtless, too much formality in the character of these visits—a disposition to drop into routine and to ask stereotyped questions, without conversing in a way to bring out the real feelings and spirit of the households which they visit. Visits of this character are comparatively barren of results. To make them as productive of good as they should be, live, active men should be used as Priests and Teachers. The best ability in the various wards can find ample field for usefulness in performing these duties. Young men who have not had experience should be associated with those who have had

experience, and they should be impressed with the importance of seeking for the Spirit of God to rest upon them in power, to dictate to them the very things that should be said to the family which they visit. The teachings which might be appropriate to one family, and be the very instruction which they might need, would not perhaps be so suitable for another family. Therefore, the necessity of having the guidance of the Spirit of God is apparent.

THE WELFARE OF THE YOUNG.

There is a tendency, almost amounting to an epidemic in some places, among the young people to indulge in cigarette smoking. The habit is filthy, unhealthy, and pernicious generally. God has spoken so plainly on this subject that there is no room to question the impropriety of this practice. The Teachers should make it their especial business, in all kindness and in a mild, instructive spirit, to reason and remonstrate with young people upon this habit. Every effort should be made to check its growth amongst us. The habit also, which some young people fall into, of using vulgarity and profanity, is one which should receive the attention of Teachers. This practice is not only offensive to all well-bred persons, but it is a gross sin in the sight of God, and should not exist among the children of the Latter-day Saints.

At the Priesthood meetings of Wards, Bishops and Counselors and other experienced Elders can do great good to the young men by imparting to them instruction upon these points and giving them explanations concerning questions which they may be asked upon the live issues and topics of the hour. There is a body of young men growing up in Zion, who, if taught as they should be, can be made most efficient in building up the Church and in strengthening its members against the various temptations to do wrong

to which they are exposed. These young men are generally full of zeal and energy and good desires, and only need to be directed aright to accomplish immense results.

PROVIDING EMPLOYMENT.

Connected with our temporal labors there is probably no point of more importance than the providing of employment for our people. The spirit of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is opposed to idleness. We do not believe that a man who has that spirit can rest content if he is not busily employed. There are many who come from other parts who have been accustomed to following branches of trade at which they cannot find employment here. There are a great many young men and young women growing up also, who do not have the necessary experience or knowledge to employ themselves. These cases should receive the attention and consideration of the Bishops and Presidents and other officers of the Church. We should aim to create industries at which the people can find employment. If all who have the influence of position, or the power that the control of means gives, would keep this subject constantly before them and work unitedly in the proper direction, a great many industries might be started in this Territory that would result in profit to their founders and give fixed employment to many who are now in want of it. In every Ward or Stake where there are opportunities of this character, judicious men should be selected to take the direction of such affairs and to make wise investments, so that discouragement will not follow through the loss of means or the unskilful handling of the business.

LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL TYRANNY.

From the day of the organization of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the adversary of souls has stirred up the wicked to accomplish its destruction. Various agencies have been employed to effect this purpose.

Falsehood, tradition, deep-rooted prejudice, the learning, wealth and power of Christendom, mob violence, fire, fetters, the rifle and the sword, wholesale expulsion and military force having been tried in vain, a new crusade has been inaugurated in the form of legislative and judicial tyranny, prompted by Satan and carried on by cunning adventurers and reckless fanatics. Perhaps the most shameful and unrepugnant attempt of this character was the latest scheme devised by the local conspirators. What is known as the Edmunds law—the act of March 22nd, 1882—was hoped to be broad enough in its intended scope to secure the political control of the Territory to the anti-“Mormon” voters. A large number of both sexes were by that act deprived of the franchise. That it did not wrench the control of the Territory out of the hands of the majority of its residents, is not to be credited to the absence of such a wish and design on the part of its authors and promoters, but to the overruling providence of the Almighty. The ground which those who favored this measure seemed to take was, that it was both praiseworthy and justifiable to violate the soundest political principles, and even the Constitution itself, to take the political control of the Territory of Utah from the “Mormon” majority and concentrate it in the hands of the anti-“Mormon” minority. Having gone thus far to accomplish this end, it was scarcely to be expected they would hesitate to make other and more outrageous attempts, when they found that the Edmunds law had not answered the full purpose for which it was intended. It appears to be one of the effects which follow a departure from sound republican and constitutional principles like the enactment of such a strange piece of legislation as the Edmunds law, that every future attempt in the same direction will be more regardless of the settled principles of political liberty than its predecessor.

The Edmunds law, instead of appeasing the anti-"Mormon" appetite for power, only whetted it. The success of its promoters in securing its passage, and the results which have followed, emboldened them to make the most extraordinary demands upon Congress for further legislation. Emisseries from Salt Lake City were employed and sent to Washington, sustained by funds levied upon and collected from the non-"Mormon" population of the Territory, to secure the passage of a law which would bind the "Mormon" people hand and foot, and leave them, their liberties, their property and all that makes life valuable and desirable, at the feet of their deadly enemies. They did not appear to doubt that their demands for legislation of this character against us would meet with ready acceptance on the part of the National Legislature and the public generally.

On the first day of the first session of the Forty-ninth Congress, Senator Edmunds introduced a bill (numbered 10 on the Senate calendar) which contained shameful unrepudiated features, the evident purpose of which was to entirely destroy all the liberties of the majority of the people of Utah. There were a few Senators who stood up manfully and resisted the passage of this measure as an attack upon religious liberty; but their protests and arguments were in vain. The bill passed the Senate and was sent to the House. It was ably discussed before the Judiciary Committee of the House by our friends, and everything was done that was possible to enlighten that committee concerning the affairs of Utah and the conspiracy which existed here to obtain the political control of the Territory. A new bill was reported by the chairman of that committee, as a substitute for the Senate bill, and the provisions of the new bill were found to be equally objectionable with the bill for which it was a substitute. The measure was modified and changed by wiser and more conservative

legislators, in spite of the efforts of those who inspired it—a result which we view as due to the overruling power of Providence and the reluctance of some reasonable public men to sanction a measure so utterly subversive as this was of the rights of citizens. An agreement was reached by the Conference Committee, composed of members of the Senate and of the House, and in its amended form the bill was reported to both houses, and passed without alteration. It finally became law, without the signature of the President. In its original form the palpable intention was to destroy the Church.

It is generally admitted that no such law was ever enacted in this country before; and to find its parallel one must search the records of mediæval times, when men's ideas of liberty were confined to such grants as despotic governments and rulers reluctantly chose to give them. The provisions interfering with the property of the Church, and looking to the escheating or other disposition of its funds in a manner contrary to the intention of the donors, are in violation of ecclesiastical rights and in the nature of confiscation and spoliation.

The disfranchisement of all the women voters, without cause and without even the allegation of crime against them, is an arbitrary exercise of despotic power without parallel in republican history. No reasonable excuse can be offered for such an invasion of political rights exercised without hindrance for seventeen years; and the vain pretence of the enemies of the Latter-day Saints that they wish to rescue the woman of Utah from bondage has, by this outrage upon freedom, been effectually silenced forever. Taken with other portions of the law it betrays an attempt to pave the way for the domination of the majority by the minority, because the former is composed of members of an unpopular Church. It should be the purpose of good citizens and

faithful Latter-day Saints to maintain the liberties which are dear to every citizen, by all legal and consistent means within their power. And while many of the men and women who, with divine assistance, opened this region to human occupation and fitted it for civilized existence, are arbitrarily deprived of any personal participation in its government, it becomes the duty as well as the privilege of those who can do so under the operation of unjustly discriminating laws, to stand up manfully and use all diligence and vigilance in the retention and prevalence of the local rule of the local majority. In thus sustaining the right and assisting in the prevention of wrong, they will have the blessings of a just God and the approval of an enlightened conscience.

A redeeming feature of the new law is the exemption of wives who are viewed as legal from testifying against their husbands in cases arising under the Edmunds act. This and the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States condemning the segregation system, by which the extreme penalties imposed by law were unlawfully multiplied upon "Mormon" defendants, are cutting rebukes to the Utah Courts and District Attorney, for their excesses and malice in pursuing persons acting under the strongest religious convictions. The relief thus afforded to many subjects of judicial persecution would doubtless be considerably extended, if other extreme rulings of the Utah Courts were reviewed by the highest tribunal of the land.

As to whether the Church is a corporation, grave doubts are entertained. This is a question yet to be determined. But if it should be decided that it is a corporation, is it possible that after a Territory has granted a charter of incorporation, and Congress has for long years permitted the Territorial act to stand unchallenged and unquestioned, the latter body can now revoke the charter and

appropriate the proceeds of the property to such uses as the majority of Congress may designate? If this be possible, well may we, with all the people of the Territories, ask: Are we living under a government of law, or are we and all our rights as freemen subject only to the whim and caprice of Congress?

The Supreme Court of the United States, in 19 Howard, page 499, said: "The power of Congress over the person and property of a citizen can never be a mere discretionary power under our Constitution and form of government. The powers of the government and the rights and privileges of the citizen are regulated and plainly defined by the Constitution itself, and when a Territory becomes a part of the United States, the Federal Government enters into possession in the character impressed upon it by those who created it. It enters upon it with its powers over the citizen strictly defined and limited by the Constitution from which it derives its own existence, and by virtue of which alone it continues to exist as a government and sovereignty. It has no power of any kind beyond it, and it cannot when it enters a Territory of the United States put off its character, and assume discretionary or despotic powers which the Constitution has denied to it. It cannot create for itself a new character separate from the citizens of the United States, and the duties it owes to them under the provisions of the Constitution."

To appropriate the property of a private corporation by saying that all beyond a certain value shall escheat to the Government is an act worthy of the dark ages when the right of the state to such property was maintained by feudal theories. In latter days the more equitable doctrine prevails, even when corporations are dissolved for violation of law, that the property of the defunct corporation goes to the corporators.

As has been well said by the court in

the case of *Wilkinson vs. Leland*, (2 Peters 65) in dealing with the question of taking the property of one and giving it to another, without judicial inquiry and by legislative enactment: "That government can scarcely be deemed free, where the rights of property are left solely dependent upon the will of the legislative body, without any restraint. The fundamental maxim of all free governments seems to require that the rights of personal liberty and of private property should be held sacred. * * *

A different doctrine is utterly inconsistent with the great and fundamental principles of a republican government and with the right of the citizens to the free enjoyment of their property lawfully acquired."

In a case which was appealed to the United States Supreme Court, (*Terrett vs. Taylor*, 9 Cranch,) which involved church property, that the Legislature of the State of Virginia had undertaken to take from the corporations holding it and turn over to trustees, as this law attempts to do, Judge Story said: "But the property was, in fact and in law, generally purchased by the parishioners or acquired by benefactions of private donors. The title thereto was indefeasibly vested in the churches, or rather in their legal agents. It was not in the power of the crown to seize or assume it, nor of the Parliament itself to destroy the grants, unless by the exercise of a power the most arbitrary, oppressive, and unjust, and endured only because it could not be resisted. It was not forfeited, for the churches had committed no offense. The dissolution of the regal government no more destroyed the right to possess or enjoy the property than it did the right of any other corporation or individual to his or its own property. * * * We think ourselves standing upon the principles of natural justice, upon the fundamental laws of every free government, upon the spirit and letter of the Constitution of the United

States, and upon the decision of the most respectable judicial tribunals, in resisting such doctrine."

It seems to plain men that this new law, in its attempt to seize and dispose of our property, lawfully acquired, is in direct conflict with the provision of the Constitution which declares that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." A well known writer has said: "They have first of all to remove a very stubborn prejudice which has been confirmed by immemorial usage that what a person honestly acquires and legally possesses is his own and not another's."

THE TEST OATH.

Probably no portion of this law has received so much attention since its passage as the section containing what is known as the "test oath." The municipal election at Brigham City, immediately after the bill became law, and the pressing necessity for a decision on the part of those who are eligible to vote in order that they might register, forced this point in the law into immediate prominence. Our enemies have circulated the most atrocious falsehoods, accusing our people of resorting to perjury when by so doing they could shield themselves and friends from punishment; but none knew better than they that in making these charges they were uttering deliberate untruths. The proof of their falsity has been witnessed in the Federal Courts every day during the past thirty months, when Latter-day Saints were being tried for taking care of and acknowledging their wives and children, and refused to give the promise which the courts endeavored to extort from them under an assurance that if they would only make it—which they were told they might easily do—they should be permitted to go unpunished.

Having tender consciences upon the subject of saying or doing anything that would have even the appearance of relinquishing any principle of their

religion, our people have carefully examined this oath and fully weighed the effect the taking of it would have upon themselves, their children and the world at large. Understanding fully, therefore, all its consequences, they who can do so have generally resolved to take the oath. But their willingness to do so does not divest it of its enormity or unconstitutional character. The rule of law is that a man is presumed innocent of offenses and of the intention to commit offenses until he is proven guilty. But by this law it is presumed that the citizens of this Territory are disposed to violate the law and they must therefore rebut the presumption by taking the oath! If the oath was expurgatory, and to be required of people who had been in rebellion, it might have a show of justification; but to require such an oath as this from citizens who have violated no law is without a parallel even among despotic governments.

CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEES TRAMPLED UPON.

It is extraordinary to what extremes men will go in their eagerness to strike a blow at the Church of Christ. We felt this when the Edmunds law of 1882 was enacted; but this feeling became one of amazement when the second Edmunds bill was rushed through the Senate at the first session of the 49th Congress, and afterwards, in a remodeled form, through the House of Representatives in the second session of the same Congress. That a powerful government like ours, representing a population of fifty-five millions of people, should magnify the words and acts of a community numerically as weak as our Church is, and exert itself in so tempestuous a manner to destroy its influence and growth, is sufficiently remarkable to excite surprise; but when to effect this the very principles upon which the whole superstructure of government rests are discarded, and the Constitution itself and its guarantees are trampled

upon, then the feeling becomes one of wonder at the madness which seems to take possession of men when what is called the "Mormon question" comes up for discussion and action. In the haste and zeal of this madness to destroy our religion, settled principles of jurisprudence are disregarded, evil precedents are established, and men talk and act as if it were absolutely essential to the happiness of the people of the republic to override every true principle of government to strike down the majority of the people of Utah. It is easy to predict what the result of this contemptuous disregard of the rights of citizens and the written pledges of the Constitution will result in. The precedents now being made will, in the not distant future, be inconceivably fruitful of evil to the people of this republic. No people or government can defy the sound principles of law which are essential to the correct administration of justice and to the maintenance of the rights of its citizens, without calling into existence forces which are calculated to lead to its destruction.

UNJUSTIFIABLE CONDUCT OF OFFICIALS

There has been no cessation in the annoyances, persecutions and unjustifiable conduct from which our people have suffered at the hands of those clothed with a little brief authority as officials in our midst. Unlawful cohabitation, an offense which, under the law, is a misdemeanor, is magnified into a crime of great turpitude, and more zeal is manifested in seeking to ferret but and punish those who are accused of it than there is in dealing with all the other crimes on the calendar. All other offenses, however gross and horrid, appear to sink into insignificance in the eyes of our Federal officials in comparison with the act of a man's caring for, furnishing, or even visiting his wives, taken by him, as he believes, in accordance with a command of God, and his children born to him in such wedlock. In

former Epistles we have described the conduct of some of these officials in fitting language. Upon slight pretexts, and where presumption merely exists, men are still arrested and treated with an indefensible severity which is nothing less than persecution, and which lifts those who endure it on to the plane of martyrs. The treatment of the Latter-day Saints in these Territories under the Edmunds law will yet be read with surprise and wonder, when the facts all become known. That American citizens should receive such usage in a government like ours professes to be, would appear incredible if it were not substantiated by convincing proofs. Aged men, whose lives have been upright and honorable, and against whom not a word of reproach can be uttered, have been ruthlessly and barbarously consigned to prison cells because they were too manly to disavow their families and to break the solemn covenants which they made in the presence of heaven with their wives.

But this has not been the extent of the inhumanity of those who have taken upon themselves the role of persecutors. Blood has been shed, and that in a most dastardly and cruel manner. Edward M. Dalton, a respectable young man, of good family and connections, while unsuspectingly riding in the streets of Parowan, was hailed by a deputy marshal—William Thompson, Jr.—concealed behind a fence, and simultaneously shot in the back. He fell from his horse and died shortly after. His slayer was indicted for manslaughter by a grand jury which he himself had summoned on open *venire*, and was tried in the Second District Court, at Beaver, the prosecuting attorney making what was virtually a plea in his behalf, and he was acquitted. No other result could have been expected under the circumstances, with such a jury, such a court, and such a prosecuting officer; for, it is only the truth to say, the deed was viewed with

satisfaction and approval by many, and defended as an act that was entirely justifiable. It might be thought that, after such an occurrence, such a man would be quietly set aside and kept from public notice. But, alas! for our country and the evil days upon which we have fallen, this man is now retained in the employ of the government and acts as a deputy marshal!

Edward M. Dalton died, it may be said, a martyr to the principles of religious freedom. His innocent blood was shed without provocation. His name will yet stand out in history as that of a victim to religious hate, and his memory will be cherished by his family and friends and our entire community with loving veneration.

Elder Lorenzo Snow, one of the Twelve Apostles, was sentenced by the First District Court to eighteen months' imprisonment in the penitentiary and \$900 fine and the costs of his trial. It was felt that this was an unjust sentence; that the grand jury, under the direction of the District Attorney, violated the law in segregating the offense with which he was charged and bringing in three indictments against him. After some trouble an appeal was secured to the United States Supreme Court, which reversed the decision of the lower court and declared segregation to be unlawful. After eleven months' confinement in the Penitentiary, which he endured with great patience and equanimity, he was released from confinement. The joy felt at this action of the Supreme Court was universal throughout the Territory; not only because of its effects on other cases, but because of the deep interest which was taken in the case of our venerated brother. Though upwards of 72 years of age and of a delicate frame, the Lord sustained him during his imprisonment in a remarkable manner, and he is now at large and able to travel and visit the Saints in their meetings and Conferences.

IN RELATION TO AMUSEMENTS.

Respecting amusements: We have given the religious world a lesson upon this point. We have shown that social enjoyment and amusements are not incompatible with correct conduct and true religion. Instead of forbidding the theatre and placing it under ban, it has been the aim of the Latter-day Saints to control it and keep it free from impure influences, and to preserve it as a place where all could meet for the purpose of healthful enjoyment. Our leading men have, therefore, gone to these places with the view, by their presence, of restraining all practices and influences that would be injurious to the young and rising generation. Too great care cannot be exercised that liberty shall not degenerate into license, and not to convert that which should furnish enjoyment and simple pleasure into a means of producing unhealthful excitement or corrupting morals.

Our social parties should be conducted in a manner to give gratification to all who attend them, however delicate and refined they may be in their feelings. Rude and boisterous conduct and everything of an improper character should be forbidden at such assemblages. It is not always convenient for the Bishop and his counselors to be present themselves on such occasions. It would be well, therefore, to select in every ward a committee of judicious, wise, good-tempered and firm men to take charge of the social parties, and to see that order is maintained, and that no improper persons are allowed to obtrude themselves into the party to disturb the peace and enjoyment of those who go there to meet with their friends and neighbors. We think round dances should not be encouraged. And while there may be no harm in granting the permission which was given by a circular of the Twelve Apostles some time ago, in which it was stated that one or two round dances might be held during the

evening, care should be taken that this is not abused or carried to excess. This style of dance has been taken advantage of by many impure persons, and respectable people have been annoyed and grieved thereat, and have felt that it should be entirely prohibited. Committee-men and officers in charge of parties should see that dances of every kind are conducted in a modest and becoming manner, and that no behavior be permitted that would lead to evil or that would offend the most delicate susceptibilities.

As the summer months are approaching, when open air recreations will become common, we deem it necessary to warn the Saints, and especially our young people, against the excesses and improprieties that often attend such public entertainments. In the inordinate desire to make money, attractions are devised to draw crowds of people together where the usual restraints that regulate good society are greatly relaxed, to the detriment of pure morality, and the breaking down of those safeguards which should protect sobriety and virtue. Pleasure and relaxation which in themselves may be not only harmless but really beneficial to mind and body, are often rendered evil in the extreme, because of their surroundings and associations. The thoughtless and inexperienced are frequently oblivious to the harm thus attending something in which there is no essential wrong, and are led to look with allowance, if not actual approval, upon things that would shock them under other circumstances. The indiscriminate commingling of the Saints with persons not of their faith whose habits, history and purposes are bad or unknown to them, is fraught with evil and to be strongly deprecated. To expose our youth to the contaminating influence of vile men and women such as often congregate in places of public amusement, where they are thrown together in social intercourse, is more than folly; it is wickedness. It is

proper that strangers should be treated with courtesy and respect but intimacy with them is not desirable, and our young people should be cautioned and guarded against casual acquaintanceship and the society of persons whose intentions and influence may be of the very worst character.

Excursion parties should be conducted by persons of standing and wisdom and under regulations that will preclude the evils that frequently attend such gatherings. When arranged for purposes of speculation, the promoters are often too heedless of consequences in their anxiety for profits, and will mix together the worst of characters and the good and unsophisticated, with results that can but be lamentable. Sunday excursions to lake or cañon, moonlight trips and late bathing trains should be emphatically discouraged. The society of persons who place themselves under the baleful influence of intoxicants should be avoided. Order should be maintained in the midst of merriment. Indecorous language and conduct should be frowned down. All excess is detrimental. Temperance should govern in everything. Amusement is not the purpose of life, it should be indulged in only by way of variety. When people accustom themselves to constant or oft-repeated rounds of pleasure, the true objects of human existence are forgotten and duty becomes irksome and detestable. Children should not be permitted to attend public gatherings without older persons accompanying to guard them from accident and from the contamination of the ungodly. The responsibility for the evils attending violations of these instructions will rest upon parents, guardians and the local Priesthood in the various wards and settlements. Persons who habitually desecrate the Lord's day cannot be held in fellowship, and members of the Church who neglect public worship and the partaking of the Sacrament and do not remember the Sabbath day

to keep it holy, will become weak in the faith and spiritually sickly, and will lose the Spirit and favor of God, and ultimately forfeit their standing in the Church and their exaltation with the obedient and faithful.

SANITATION.

Among the pressing requirements of the summer months is special attention to sanitary measures. The Saints ought always to be cleanly in their habits, persons and surroundings. But during the heat of the summer this becomes particularly needful. Much disease can be avoided by frequent abutions, simple diet and the destruction or removal of all refuse. Cleanliness is part of godliness. Filth is obnoxious to the spirit of the Gospel. It is the breeding place for epidemics. Our bodies, our houses, our gardens and outhouses should all be kept free from uncleanly accumulations. Individual effort in this direction is a necessity, and this should be supplemented by organized regulations in the various wards so that the atmosphere may not become charged with the germs of disease and death, arising from decaying vegetable and other matter festering in the sun, and from unwholesome vapors arising from dirt and neglected refuse. Let pure air and bright sunshine have free circulation in every apartment; remove everything in the house or around it that sends forth sickening odors; avoid the use of much animal food and of stimulants; preserve a cheerful spirit and a serene mind, and under the blessings of our Heavenly Father health and peace will abound and joy will dwell in the habitations of the Saints.

SELECTION OF MISSIONARIES.

We are constantly calling for missionaries to go to the various fields of labor in this country, in Europe, and in other parts of the world. The greatest care should be taken to select suitable persons for this duty. It often costs a considerable sum to send

men to the field of labor for which they are selected; hence it is important that proper persons should be chosen, that their time and the means necessary for their transportation be not wasted. We have a large number of young men who ought to be very suitable for missionaries. Our Sunday schools and theological classes, and our young men's mutual improvement associations, should give our young men who avail themselves of these facilities an excellent preparation for missionary labor. Every young man who has faith should be taught to consider a mission to the world as an honorable event in his life, for which he will diligently prepare himself, and which he will look forward to with pleasure. There is an immense field lying before us, which must be occupied by our Elders in order to fulfil the obligations God has laid upon us. Presidents of Stakes, Bishops of Wards, and Presidents of Quorums should exercise a wise discretion in selecting for missions worthy persons, who will do the cause they represent no discredit, and who will be useful in the labor assigned them.

SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

We suggest to the Bishops and others whose duty it is to appoint Sunday School Superintendents the great necessity of care in the selection of these officers, as on them depend, more than on any other persons, the conduct, progress and well-being of the schools. An efficient superintendent implies a good school. Three characteristics, wherever obtainable are most desirable in the Sunday School Superintendent—a love of his work, an aptness for control, and a devotion to the cause of God. In the last named we include, as a matter of course, a life consistent with his professions, that there may be no jar in the minds of his scholars between the force of his teachings and the influence of his conduct. It is also desirable that the superintendent be furnished

with the most experienced and devoted help that the ward affords; as that officer is placed at a great disadvantage if he have an inefficient corps of teachers, and the progress of our children is materially retarded, and much valuable time and effort ill-spent, if his labors are not sustained by his associates.

Our brethren and sisters should always remember that the work of teaching in our Sunday schools imposes upon them a moral obligation to make their daily walk and conversation accord with their teachings. Of all lessons, the living lesson is the best. Children are surprisingly shrewd in detecting inconsistencies between the instructions and habits of their instructors. Besides, the teacher who seeks to live up to his own advice, not only benefits his scholars, but his teachings exert a salutary influence upon himself, and he profits by his own lessons.

AGRICULTURE AND TREE PLANTING.

The winter which has passed has been remarkable for its mildness in the central and southern parts of the Territory. In the extreme north storms have been more frequent and the season been more severe. But, taken as a whole, the winter has been an extremely favorable one. The open weather of the past two months has enabled farmers to get in their crops with a facility and to an extent rarely equaled. Good health has generally prevailed throughout our settlements, and food for man and beast has been generally abundant.

In former Epistles we have dwelt upon the necessity of improving our system of agriculture. The Saints have been counseled to select the best kinds of grains, fruits and vegetables. Our soil is admirably adapted for the production of the best varieties of these articles, and there is no reason why we should not have them of as good quality as can be raised anywhere in our zone. The same remarks apply to

horned stock, horses and sheep, and all kinds of poultry. It is only repeating a truism to say that it is as easy to raise a good colt, a good calf, or a good sheep, as to raise a poor one.

Tree planting should be systematically followed throughout these treeless regions which we occupy. The best varieties of trees should be sought for. In the early days we had to use quick-growing varieties that were easily procured. But with our present railroad facilities we can select trees which are best adapted for future use in building, for manufacturing purposes, and for ornament. In some of the prairie States a day has been set apart in the spring of each year for the planting of trees, which is called Arbor Day. The results which have followed the devotion of one day to this purpose are said to be very marked in regions where it is observed. But we should not confine our tree-planting to one day. Every man who owns a piece of ground should increase its value by planting fruit and shade trees, and make his selection of the latter from those kinds that will prove valuable as timber. The general planting of hardwood trees would be attended with greater profit and much more satisfactory results than the wide-spread cultivation of varieties of the cottonwood and poplar. These latter grow readily and afford shade, but are of very little further use except for firewood.

MISCELLANEOUS MATERIAL MATTERS.

It is beyond doubt that the exportations and general marketing of the surplus products of our Territory form quite an addition to the financial resources of the people. More care, however, should be exercised in putting up and taking care of articles intended for shipment to points within the Territory, or outside its borders.

The manufacture and care of butter should receive attention. This article is among the most sensitive to its surroundings, so that cleanliness in every

stage if of vital importance. In this direction great improvement has been made in the Eastern States; and it would be well for neighborhoods to combine and purchase suitable plant and machinery and acquire skill in the improved method of manufacturing butter.

Many of our cheese factories now turn out an article that is very desirable and which commands ready sale and the full price in the market. There is room for the increased manufacture of this product.

The income of the Territory from the sale of eggs is not an inconsiderable item. If any economical method could be devised for preserving them when abundant it would be a great advantage, and the price would be more nearly equal at different seasons of the year.

The dried fruit business has been quite remunerative in the past, but our people need to be more careful in drying. Cleanliness is essential, and the adoption of the Alden or other process would help us to maintain the old credit which our Territory had for the excellence of its dried fruit.

The shipment of hides from our Territory ought to cease, and tanneries should be fostered in every locality where they can be maintained.

The same may be said about wool. Wise economy would prompt the establishment of a sufficient number of woolen mills to purchase and manufacture all our home grown wool, so that instead of exporting the raw material we should manufacture it ourselves and pay our own people the wages therefor that we otherwise have to pay to workmen in other places.

The Territory exports considerable grain, lucern seed and potatoes. These products have sometimes been poorly cleaned and not been properly assorted, and this negligence injures our credit and spoils our market. Making the professions which we do as Latter-day Saints, and having the promises of the Lord concerning the aid which He will give unto us, our business affairs

should be conducted in a way that will show that our professions are not vain.

A PERIOD OF TRANSITION.

The Church is now passing through a period of transition, or evolution, as some might be pleased to term it. Such periods appear to be necessary in the progress and perfecting of all created things, as much so in the history of peoples and communities as of individuals. These periods of transition have most generally their pains, perplexities and sufferings. The present is no exception to the rule. But out of apparent evil, Providence will bring abundant good, and the lesson which the signs of the times should teach us is one of patience, endurance, and calm reliance on the Lord. The result will be that we shall be stronger, wiser, purer, happier, for the experience gained, and the work of the Lord, delivered by His Omnipotence from all the snares set for its retardation, or plans laid for its destruction, will yet triumph gloriously over all its foes, and the infinite atonement of the Redeemer will accomplish its perfect work. The final victory of the Saints is certain; after the trial comes the reward.

CONCLUSION.

We cannot close our Epistle without expressing, as we have often done before, our faith and hopes concerning the great work in which we are engaged. "The Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of His people shall trust in it." Our hearts are filled with gratitude and thanksgiving to our Great Creator that we have the privilege of living in this age of the world, and taking part in this great work. We feel that all who have entered into covenant with God and who suffer persecution for His cause, have reason for rejoicing, even as Jesus told His disciples when He was upon the earth: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." If we are perse-

cuted for our religion, it is no more than we have been taught to expect. All who have been baptized into this Church, and who were properly taught at the time, were led to expect that they would have to suffer as our Lord and Master and His disciples did. Our Savior has given us ample testimony upon this point. We need not, therefore, be surprised nor disappointed when persecution comes. We have, however, many great and glorious promises made to us. God has established Zion, nevermore to be thrown down, nor to be given into the hands of another people. The most encouraging words that could be uttered by Our Almighty Father to His children have been given to us. We have proved them to be true up to the present, and we know every word will be fulfilled that has been spoken concerning the future. They who fight against Zion shall be destroyed; and the pit which has been digged for our destruction shall be filled by those who digged it, unto their utter destruction.

The enemies of righteousness may gather themselves together, and plot evil, and effect secret combinations, and say concerning Zion: "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. But they know not the thoughts of the Lord, neither understand they His counsel." The Lord has stretched forth His hand and He has spoken His word. He will not withdraw it, either, until His purposes concerning the earth and its inhabitants shall be completely fulfilled. We need not fear nor tremble. The afflictions which our Father permits to come upon us will be made light unto us, and they will be made to appear as very trifling in comparison with the calamities that He has said shall come upon the ungodly inhabitants of the earth. Great judgments are pronounced upon Babylon, and they will be fulfilled to the very letter. But if we do as the Prophet says: "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought His judgment; seek righteousness, seek meek-

ness; it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger;" we shall be saved from impending evils.

The Lord has given unto us an inheritance upon this land, which He declares is a choice land. He has told us that whatsoever nation shall possess it shall be free from bondage and from captivity, and from all other nations under heaven, if they will but serve the God of the land, who is Jesus Christ. These words have been fulfilled in the fate which has befallen nations in the past; they will be fulfilled in the future. If we keep the commandments of God, if we serve Him with diligence and full purpose of heart, the Lord will not suffer us to be brought into bondage to our enemies, but will give us freedom, and maintain it upon the land to which He has led us. We may rest confidently upon His promises to Zion, and be assured that the time will come when it shall be "a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the Saints of the Most High God; and the glory of the Lord shall be there, and the terror of the Lord shall be there, insomuch that the wicked will not come unto it" and it shall be called Zion. And it shall come to pass among the wicked, that every man that will not take his sword against his neighbor, must needs flee

unto Zion for safety. And there shall be gathered unto it out of every nation under heaven; and it shall be the only people that shall not be at war one with another. And it shall be said among the wicked, 'Let us not go up to battle against Zion, for the inhabitants of Zion are terrible; wherefore we cannot stand.' And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations, and shall come to Zion, singing songs of everlasting joy." These promises are made to us directly, and the Spirit of God bears testimony to us to-day that they are true.

With full confidence that the dense clouds which have darkened our horizon during the past two or three years will be soon dissipated by the bright rays of the sun of righteousness, and invoking the blessings that come through patient endurance of affliction and faithful adherence to the right, upon the Saints of God in all the world, we subscribe ourselves,

Your fellowservants in the great work of the latter days,

JOHN TAYLOR,

GEORGE Q. CANNON,

JOSEPH F. SMITH,

First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

April, 1887.

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